

Streams Hub's The Very Merry Market showcases local vendors and young creators

Written By Joshua Drakes

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Streams Community Hub brought together local vendors and youth creators for its annual Very Merry Market on Friday, Nov. 28, and Saturday, Nov. 29.

Megan Mare, program coordinator at Streams Hub, said this market is an annual tradition that helps raise community spirit during the holidays.

"The Very Merry Market has been going on for the last four years, starting in 2022, right when I came on board," she said. "It was so nice to be able to collaborate with Streams and do something for the community while we are running other events like the Word of Mouth Monologue Competition."

She said that Streams wanted to bring in people to support local initiatives during the holidays as well.

"We thought, at the end of the year, before things really slow down and the programs come to an end, let's do a holiday market," she said. "It'll be a time to bring people together while also supporting local businesses and charities."

Mare continued by saying that the market is never static. Every year, Streams Hub looks for new ways to expand, update, or change up the market so it stays fresh and offers new things to returning guests and new visitors.

"Each year we try to make it bigger and better in our little space that it feels like we're already outgrowing," Mare said. "We have local vendors that come out. This year we have five to six, though we typically have six to eight. We have photographers, selfie stations and things that we try to bring in."

This year, Streams had something new. For the first time, the Very Merry Market featured an online auction that ran throughout the market. Mare said there were good choices to pick from, often priced lower than what they'd cost online.

All proceeds went back to the not-for-profit, arts-focused Streams Community Hub, so the buyer gets a one-of-a-kind item and the money stays in the community.

Each vendor in attendance offered a variety of unique items for sale.

Among them was a jewelry vendor and a vendor selling handmade charcuterie boards, utensils, candles, and more.

There was even a youth vendor present - Sticker Sugar.

Run by three sisters, Alex, Amaya and Akeylah James, they turned their love of art and colour from a hobby into a youth-run local business.

All designs are created by and handpicked by the sisters. Alongside their wide assortment of themed sticker bundles, they were also selling their own book, *Afro, No!*, written by Amaya James.

The book has sold over 900 copies online.

The market, Mare said, is a perfect way for young creators and local vendors to get their work seen by others.

Now in its fourth year, The Very Merry Market has brought in returning families and new guests, offering unique local products and raising support for local holiday initiatives.